



Climate change, environmental degradation and armed conflict

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Abstract:

Climate change is expected to bring about major change in freshwater availability, the productive capacity of soils, and in patterns of human settlement. However, considerable uncertainties exist with regard to the extent and geographical distribution of these changes. Predicting scenarios for how climate-related environmental change may influence human societies and political systems necessarily involves an even higher degree of uncertainty. The direst predictions about the impacts of global warming warn about greatly increased risks of violent conflict over increasingly scarce resources such as freshwater and arable land. We argue that our best guess about the future has to be based on our knowledge about the relationship between demography, environment and violent conflict in the past. Previous rigorous studies in the field have mostly focused on national-level aggregates. This article represents a new approach to assess the impact of environment on internal armed conflict by using georeferenced (GIS) data and small geographical, rather than political, units of analysis. It addresses some of the most important factors assumed to be strongly influenced by global warming: land degradation, freshwater availability, and population density and change. While population growth and density are associated with increased risks, the effects of land degradation and water scarcity are weak, negligible or insignificant. The results indicate that the effects of political and economic factors far outweigh those between local level demographic/ environmental factors and conflict.

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Resource Description

Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Ecosystem Changes, Human Conflict/Displacement, Human Conflict/Displacement

Geographic Feature:

resource focuses on specific type of geography

Freshwater

Geographic Location:

resource focuses on specific location

Global or Unspecified

Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

Health Co-Benefit/Co-Harm (Adaption/Mitigation):

specification of beneficial or harmful impacts to health resulting from efforts to reduce or cope with greenhouse gases

A focus of content

Health Co-Benefit/Co-Harm (Family Planning/Population Reduction):

specification of beneficial or harmful impacts to health resulting from efforts to promote family planning or reduce population growth as a climate change adaptation or mitigation measure

A focus of content

Health Impact:

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

General Health Impact

Mitigation/Adaptation:

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation

Population of Concern: A focus of content

Population of Concern:

populations at particular risk or vulnerability to climate change impacts

Low Socioeconomic Status

Resource Type:

format or standard characteristic of resource

Research Article

Timescale:

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified

Vulnerability/Impact Assessment:

resource focus on process of identifying, quantifying, and prioritizing vulnerabilities in a system

A focus of content